Sustainability in Healthcare: Are Kenyan Hospitals Ready for a Greener Future?

Healthcare facilities are vital to national well-being—but they also consume significant resources, generate hazardous waste, and contribute to environmental degradation. As Kenya moves toward a more sustainable future, the healthcare sector must evolve to reduce its ecological footprint while maintaining high standards of care.

Sustainable hospitals—those designed with environmental efficiency in mind—can reduce operational costs, improve public health outcomes, and strengthen climate resilience. Leaders like **Jayesh Saini**, founder of Lifecare Hospitals, Bliss Healthcare, and Dinlas Pharma, are beginning to align their healthcare operations with green practices, making sustainability a core component of hospital development and management.

This article explores the status of sustainability in Kenyan healthcare, the role of hospital leadership in implementing eco-friendly practices, and whether the country is prepared to build greener, more efficient healthcare systems.

1. Why Sustainability Matters in Healthcare

1.1 Environmental Impact of Healthcare Operations

- Hospitals operate **24/7**, consuming large amounts of **electricity, water, and medical supplies**.
- Medical facilities generate **biohazardous waste**, which requires careful disposal to prevent contamination.
- Poor waste management and energy inefficiencies lead to **pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and public health risks**.

1.2 Aligning with Global Climate and Health Goals

Kenya has committed to **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly:

- **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being**
- **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**
- **SDG 13: Climate Action**

A transition to sustainable healthcare supports Kenya's **Vision 2030**, and strengthens the sector's ability to withstand future environmental and economic shocks.

2. Green Hospital Design: A Blueprint for the Future

2.1 Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Hospitals consume large amounts of energy for lighting, ventilation, diagnostics, and sterilization. A shift to **energy-efficient designs** and **renewable energy sources** is crucial.

Key Opportunities:

- **Solar power integration** for lighting and backup systems.
- **LED lighting and automated controls** to reduce energy waste.
- **Energy-efficient HVAC systems** in operating theatres and ICUs.

Lifecare Hospitals, under Jayesh Saini's leadership, has begun exploring **solar installations in select facilities**, reducing reliance on the national grid and ensuring operational continuity during outages.

2.2 Sustainable Construction Materials

Eco-conscious hospitals use:

- **Locally sourced, low-emission building materials**.
- **Insulation and natural ventilation designs** to reduce cooling/heating needs.
- **Water-saving fixtures and rainwater harvesting systems**.

In new hospital builds, sustainable architecture is being considered to ensure **lower lifecycle costs and environmental impact**.

3. Medical Waste Management: Reducing Harm, Promoting Safety

3.1 The Challenge of Hospital Waste

Kenyan hospitals generate increasing volumes of:

- **General waste**
- **Biohazardous waste**
- **Pharmaceutical and chemical waste**
- **Single-use plastics (e.g., syringes, IV bags, gloves)**

Improper waste disposal leads to:

- **Air, soil, and water contamination**
- **Health risks to medical workers and surrounding communities**

3.2 Modern Waste Management Solutions

Sustainable hospitals are adopting:

- **Autoclaving and incineration systems** with emissions control.

- **Color-coded waste segregation** at source.
- **Recycling programs** for non-contaminated materials.
- **Electronic tracking systems** to monitor waste generation and disposal.

Institutions like **Bliss Healthcare** are implementing **waste segregation training and compliance protocols** across their outpatient centers to ensure safer and more sustainable practices.

4. Greening Operations: From Supply Chain to Procurement

Sustainability goes beyond infrastructure—it includes daily operations and procurement choices.

4.1 Eco-Friendly Procurement Practices

Hospitals can reduce environmental impact by:

- Procuring **biodegradable or reusable materials**.
- Sourcing **locally manufactured pharmaceuticals**, reducing emissions from transportation.
- Working with **suppliers who meet environmental compliance standards**.

Dinlas Pharma, founded by Jayesh Saini, plays a pivotal role in reducing pharmaceutical transport emissions by **manufacturing over 140 million tablets locally every month**, distributed across Kenya through efficient logistics.

4.2 Digital Transformation and Paper Reduction

E-health systems also contribute to sustainability:

- **Electronic medical records** reduce paper use and storage needs.
- **Digital prescriptions and lab reports** minimize printing and filing.
- **Telemedicine** reduces patient travel, lowering carbon footprints.

Bliss Healthcare's **digital patient management system** has drastically reduced paper dependency across its branches.

5. Barriers to Sustainable Healthcare in Kenya

Despite progress, several challenges remain:

- **High upfront costs** for green infrastructure and equipment.
- **Limited awareness or training** on environmental health practices.
- **Weak enforcement** of environmental standards in medical facilities.
- **Inconsistent waste disposal infrastructure**, especially in rural areas.

Overcoming these barriers requires **leadership, policy support, and public-private collaboration**.

6. Policy Recommendations and the Way Forward

To prepare Kenyan hospitals for a greener future, the following policy actions are necessary:

1. **Establish national green building standards** for healthcare facilities.
2. **Provide tax incentives or grants** for hospitals investing in solar energy and waste management technology.
3. **Mandate waste segregation and disposal protocols**, with regular audits.
4. **Include environmental sustainability in NHIF and Ministry of Health funding criteria**.
5. **Invest in training and awareness programs** for hospital staff on environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

As the climate crisis intensifies and healthcare demand increases, Kenya must invest in sustainable hospital infrastructure and operations. A greener healthcare system will not only reduce environmental harm but also lower long-term costs, improve patient safety, and enhance system resilience.

Jayesh Saini's healthcare ventures—Lifecare Hospitals, Bliss Healthcare, and Dinlas Pharma—illustrate how private institutions can take the lead in sustainable healthcare

transformation. By integrating solar energy, digital systems, local production, and waste management protocols, these organizations are shaping a blueprint for Kenya's greener medical future.

With the right investments and policy frameworks, Kenyan hospitals can become climate-smart institutions, ready to serve communities today—while safeguarding the environment for tomorrow.